

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W

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R 061934Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8995

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 03458

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UK, PINT

SUBJECT: RESTIVENESS ON TORY FRONT BENCH

REF: LONDON 2942

SUMMARY. MEDIA HAVE CONTINUED KEEP EAGLE EYE ON CHANGES AND RUMORS OF CHANGES IN CONSERVATIVE PARTY UNDER THATCHER LEADERSHIP; MEDIA HAVE NOW DETECTED SOME HEAT AND PASSION IN REACTION OF SOME TORY MP'S TO SACKING OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL WOLFF AND OTHER CHANGES AT PARTY HEAD-QUARTERS. THATCHER HAD, OF COURSE, PROMISED HER PARTY NOT A ROSE GARDEN BUT A COMBINATION OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY, AND REPORTED REACTIONS OF STRONG OPPOSITION AND
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CRITICISM (IN WOLFF'S CASE AT LEAST) APPEAR UNWARRANTED;

AS A RESULT, THERE EXISTS THE STRONG SUSPICION THAT THE CHANGES IN HEADQUARTERS HAVE BEEN UTILIZED AS A FOCUS FOR THOSE IN THE PARTY WHO, FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, RESENT THATCHER'S DEFEAT OF HEATH OR ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT MORE SUBSTANTIVE ANTICIPATED CHANGES. END SUMMARY.

1. TELEVISION AND DAILY PRESS HAVE MADE MUCH OF REPORTED OPPOSITION BY TORY MP'S TO CHANGES IN CONSERVATIVE PARTY HEADQUARTERS STAFF ANNOUNCED MARCH 5. PRINCIPAL CHANGE ANNOUNCED WAS SACKING BY NEWLY APPOINTED PARTY CHAIRMAN LORD THORNEYCROFT OF PARTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL MICHAEL WOLFF; IT WAS FURTHERMORE ANNOUNCED SOME OF HIS FUNCTIONS WOULD BE ASSUMED BY MP WILLIAM CLARK AS JOINT DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (WITH ANGUS MAUDE). ACCORDING TO PRESS, JAMES PRIOR, SHADOW EMPLOYMENT SECRETARY, SHOWED HIS DISPLEASURE OVER THE CHANGE BY ABSENTING HIMSELF FROM AN IMPORTANT DIVISION ON REPORT STAGE OF FINANCE BILL WITHOUT PAIRING (PRIOR ACKNOWLEDGED IN MARCH 6 STATEMENT HIS ABSENCE WAS INDEED INTENDED TO SHOW A MEASURE OF HIS DISPLEASURE). OTHER FRONT BENCHERS CITED AS TAKING THE SAME VIEW WERE SIR GEOFFREY HOWE (SHADOW CHANCELLOR), IAN GILMOUR (SHADOW HOME SECRETARY), AND SIR KEITH JOSEPH WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY ON SHADOW CABINET FOR DIRECTION OF POLICY RESEARCH.

2. WOLFF'S POSITION WAS OF COURSE IMMEDIATELY VULNERABLE AS A RESULT OF THE FIRST BALLOT IN THE LEADERSHIP ELECTION. WOLFF HAD SERVED HEATH AS SPEECH WRITER WHILE HE WAS PRIME MINISTER AND WAS PUT INTO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL JOB ABOUT ELEVEN MONTHS AGO AFTER HEATH BECAME LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. WHILE WOLFF'S JOB WAS TO MODERNIZE PARTY ORGANIZATIONS AND THE HEADQUARTERS MACHINERY, HE CONTINUED TO SERVE AS SPEECH WRITER AND ADVISOR TO HEATH, ESPECIALLY DURING THE OCTOBER CAMPAIGN. HIS STANDING IN HEADQUARTERS WAS CONTROVERSIAL FROM THE BEGINNING SINCE HE WAS NEITHER A TRUE-BLUE CONSERVATIVE WITH DEEP ROOTS IN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 03458

THE PARTY NOR AN EFFICIENCY OR MANAGEMENT EXPERT. HIS BACKGROUND BEFORE HIS LINKUP WITH HEATH WAS EXCLUSIVELY JOURNALISM AND HE WAS FOR A TIME US CORRESPONDENT FOR A LONDON DAILY.

3. WOLFF WAS CONVINCED THAT HEATH WOULD WIN ON THE FIRST BALLOT AND WAS NOT EVEN IN SMITH SQUARE WHEN THE RESULTS OF THAT BALLOT AND HEATH'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL FROM THE LISTS WERE ANNOUNCED--HE WAS OUT OF TOWN AND COULD NOT BE REACHED. AFTER THATCHER'S VICTORY, HE TOLD THE REPORTING OFFICER AT A SOCIAL EVENT HELD FOR YOUNG CONSERVATIVES IN EASTBOURNE FEBRUARY 8 THAT HIS "RESIGNATION WAS ALREADY WRITTEN OUT." OTHER STRONG HEATH SUPPORTERS ON THE HEADQUARTERS STAFF (SARA MORRISON AND CONFIDENTIAL

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DAVID KNOX) ALSO INDICATED ON THE SAME OCCASION THAT THATCHER'S VICTORY WOULD MEAN A BIG SHAKE-UP IN SMITH SQUARE (MRS. MORRISON TOOK THE INITIATIVE A FEW DAYS AGO IN ANNOUNCING HER RESIGNATION, KNOX IS TRAVELING ON A US GOVERNMENT GRANT BUT LEFT A SIGNED RESIGNATION BEHIND WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED).

4. WHETHER THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A SPAT IN THE HONEY-MOON ATMOSPHERE MRS. THATCHER HAS BEEN ENJOYING TO DATE WITH THE PARTY, THE MEDIA, AND THE PUBLIC REMAINS TO BE SEEN. WOLFF'S DISMISSAL PER SE PROBABLY HAS LITTLE TO

DO WITH A MAJOR SHIFT IN CONSERVATIVE PARTY POLICIES;
WOLFF WAS CONCERNED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY WITH WORD-SMITH-
ING, TACTICS AND STRATEGY AND, TO A LIMITED EXTENT, WITH
ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS. PARLAYING HIS DISMISSAL INTO
MUCH MORE THAN A ROUTINE AXING OF A HEATH MAN SMACKS OF
THE PR TECHNIQUES WOLFF CONSIDERS HIMSELF AN EXPERT IN.
IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT WOLFF EXTENDED A LOT OF
EFFORT FROM HIS SMITH SQUARE OFFICE ON MAINTAINING HIS
CONTACTS WITH THE WORKING PRESS. HE WOULD NOT BE AD-
VERSE TO STIMULATING SOME OPPOSITION TO THATCHER. IN
EASTBOURNE HE TOLD THE REPORTING OFFICER THAT HEATH WAS
NOT FINISHED OFF AND WOULD FIND A WAY OF RETURNING TO A
SIGNIFICANT POSITION IN PARTY AFFAIRS.

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